

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

JOINT EMBASSY/UNC MESSAGE

DEPARTMENT ALSO PASS SECDEF

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, KS, KN, US

C

SUBJECT: ROKS PROBE U.S. REACTION TO NORTH KOREAN MESSAGE

1. DEFENSE MINISTER SUH CHONG-CHJOL AND FOREIGN MINISTER TONG-JIN PARK HAD SEPARATE MEETINGS WITH CINCUNC AND AMBASSADOR RESPECTIVELY AUGUST 22 TO DISCUSS KIM IL SUNG'S MESSAGE DELIVERED AT AUGUST 21 MEETING BETWEEN NORTH KOREAN AND U.S. SENIOR MAC REPRESENTATIVES.

2. ACTING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS FROM PRESIDENT PARK, AT A JUST COMPLETED NSC MEETING, BOTH MINISTERS ESSENTIALLY CHARACTERIZED NORTH'S REPLY AS NOT ACCEPTABLE, THOUGHT IT SHOULD BE REFUTED, AND URGED THAT WE KEEP PRESSURE ON NORTH KOREA UNTIL SATISFACTORY RESPONSE OBTAINED.

3. FOREIGN MINISTER PARK NOTED TO AMBASSADOR THAT NORTH KOREAN RESPONSE HAD NOT EXPRESSED CLEAR REGRET AND HAD PUT BOTH SIDES' "EFFORTS" TO MAINTAIN SECURITY ON EQUAL FOOTING, RATHER THAN ACCEPTING SOLE RESPONSIBILITY. FOREIGN MINISTER PARK THOUGHT NORTH KOREAN RESPONSE OFFERED NO ENCOURAGEMENT BUT WAS SIMPLY CAREFULLY WORDED STATEMENT OF USUAL POSITION DESIGNED TO DEFEND NORTH KOREAN CONTENTION THEY NEVER PROVOKED

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PROBLEMS IN FIRST INSTANCE. AT SAME TIME HE RECOGNIZED NORTH

KOREAN MESSAGE WAS MUCH MORE CONCILIATORY IN TONE THAN IN PAST. PARK, INCIDENTALLY, DID NOT REFER TO AUGUST 17 MEETING OF MAC SECRETARIES MEETING.

4. MINISTER SUH EMPHASIZED TO CINCUNC THAT SUPREME COMMANDER'S AUGUST 21 MESSAGE TO CINC'S EARLIER MESSAGE WAS, IN ROK VIEW, INADEQUATE SINCE IT INFERRED US INSTIGATION DENIED CULPABILITY AND GAVE INADEQUATE ASSURANCES ABOUT FUTURE ACTIONS. HE NOTED THE MESSAGE MUST BE READ IN CONTEXT WITH DPRK'S PUBLIC STATEMENT MADE AUGUST 22 (SEE FBIS) THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER'S DEMANDS WERE MERELY PRETEXT FOR IGNITING ANOTHER WAR. MINISTER SUH ALLUDED TO PUEBLO INCIDENT WHEN U.S. HAD BEEN FORCED TO BACK DOWN TO ACHIEVE THE RELEASE OF THE CREW. (THE INFERENCE WAS TO A LACK OF SIMILAR CONSTRAINT AT THIS TIME).

5. BOTH CINCUNC AND AMBASSADOR QUESTIONED RESPECTIVE MINISTERS CAREFULLY AS TO EXACTLY WHAT THEY PRESCRIBED. REPLIES INDICATE ROKS WISH TO KEEP PRESSURE ON NORTH, WITHOUT BEING TOO SPECIFIC. THEY WANT US TO CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR A FORMAL APOLOGY AND EXTRACT PROMISE THAT SUCH INCIDENTS AS HAVE OCCURRED WILL NOT BE REPEATED. NEITHER TOOK SPECIFIC NOTE OF TREE CUTTING AS MEASURE OF PRESSURE. ROKS ALSO WISH US TO KEEP AUGMENTATION FORCES IN KOREA UNTIL THESE OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED. MINISTER SUH NOTED THAT IT WAS OF LITTLE USE TO DEPLOY FORCES AND THEN RETURN THEM PRIOR TO ACHIEVING THE "POLITICAL" ENDS THAT THEY WERE INITIALLY DISPATCHED TO ACCOMPLISH. HE ADDED THAT WE SHOULD IN LIGHT OF PRESIDENT FORD'S, SECRETARY KISSINGER, AND CINCUNC DEMANDS CONTINUE TO PRESS NORTH TO MAKE AN APOLOGY, PROVIDE REPARATIONS, PUNISH OFFICERS RESPONSIBLE FOR AUGUST 18 KILLING AND GIVE ASSURANCE OF NON RECURRENCE, (SEE CINCUNC 190720Z AUG 76 FOR SIMILAR STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT PARK.) CJCS RHO NOTED THAT ROK SENTIMENT NOW RUNNING HIGH AGAINST BARBARIC MURDER OF U.S. OFFICERS. MINISTER SUH ALLUDED TO THE ROK PEOPLE WONDERING ABOUT DPRK REPLY AND WHY ROKS NOT PRESENT AT AUGUST 21 MEETING. SUH PROPOSED THAT CONTENTS OF NORTHERN REPLY BE MADE PUBLIC AND SIMULTANEOUSLY BE DECLARED UNACCEPTABLE. (COMMENT: PUBLIC SENTIMENT IN ROK IS AT LEAST IN PART ENGENDERED BY ROK PRESS GUIDANCE.)

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6. BOTH MINISTERS EMPHASIZED THAT ROKS DID NOT WISH US TO TAKE MILITARY ACTIONS, BUT STRESSED THAT FURTHER ACTIONS SHOULD BE DIPLOMATIC.

7. FOREIGN MINISTER PARK AGREED THAT ROKS WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION WERE WE, IF WE SO DECIDED, TO PURSUE WITH NORTH KOREANS MEANING OF THEIR PROPOSAL AT AUGUST 21 MEETING THAT BOTH SIDES SHOULD MAKE EFFORTS "SO THAT SUCH INCIDENTS

MAY NOT OCCUR IN THE FUTURE." BEYOND THESE RATHER GENERAL PRESCRIPTIONS, ONLY OTHER SUGGESTION MADE BY FOREIGN MINISTER WAS THAT WE CONTINUE TO KEEP PANMUNJOM CLOSED TO TOURISTS FOR TIME BEING TO AVOID GIVING IMPRESSION WE THOUGHT THINGS IN JSA BACK TO NORMAL.

8. MAIN POINTS MINISTERS WISHED TO MAKE WERE THAT ROKG FOUND KIM IL SUNG REPLY UNACCEPTABLE AND INADEQUATE; THAT US SHOULD CONTINUE TO PRESS NORTH KOREA FOR APOLOGY, PUNISHMENT OF OFFENDERS AND ASSURANCES OF NON-RECURRENCE; AND THAT FAILURE TO PRESS FOR THESE CONCESSIONS (RECOGNIZING THAT THEY WERE UNLIKELY TO BE ATTAINED) WOULD IN THEIR VIEW DISAPPOINT ROK PUBLIC DEEPLY. BOTH MINISTERS WERE NOT EXPLICIT ON FURTHER U.S. ACTIONS, EXCEPT TO SEEK REGRETS AND FUTURE ASSURANCES. WHILE THEY DID NOT SAY SO SPECIFICALLY, OBVIOUS THAT MINISTERS WERE ALSO EXPRESSING DEEP ROK NERVOUSNESS ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF US GETTING INVOLVED IN BILATERAL NEGOTIATION WITH NORTH KOREA.

9. IN CLOSING, FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT PRESIDENT PARK WOULD CALL AMBASSADOR ON SHORTLY TO DISCUSS FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION AND WOULD HOPE AMBASSADOR TO HAVE WASHINGTON REACTION TO EVENTS AND PROPOSALS FOR SATISFACTORY WAY TO PROCEED AND TO BRING TO A CLOSE UNHAPPY JSA INCIDENT.

10. OUR COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WILL FOLLOW.
SNEIDER

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED SECDEF.

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